

SPIRITUAL COPING IN COUNSELING WITH TRAUMA SURVIVORS

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Spiritual Coping in Counseling with Trauma Survivors

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Abstract

Instances of past trauma are common in clients who are seeking help working through feelings of anxiety and depression. This research project will investigate the use of spiritual coping with clients who have experienced trauma involving intimate partner violence. The literature will identify areas that are important to consider when working with this population. Spirituality will be explored and along with Existentialism serve as the framework for working with trauma survivors. Due to the concentration of Alaska Native and American Indian individuals in Alaska, culture specific interventions are described. The application for this project, based on a review of the literature, is a training for master's level counseling students designed to educate future counselors about spiritual coping.

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Spiritual Coping in Trauma

Working through traumatic events is difficult. Trauma has many definitions derived from a variety of perspectives, however, for this project, trauma is defined as an emotional response connected to an awful event like a rape, accident, or natural disaster. Soon after the event denial and shock are common. Longer-term reactions include flashbacks, strained relationships, erratic emotions, with physical manifestations such as nausea or headaches (American Psychological Association, 2015). According to Regehr, LeBlanc, Jelley, Barath, and Daciuk (2007), the first experience of trauma begins affecting an individual's core assumptions concerning self-worth; later, trauma increases this effect.

Survivors of trauma face difficult obstacles in daily life. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the primary focus of this research project, specifically as it applies to victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). Pitchford's (2009) research suggests existentialism is a solid framework for assisting victims of trauma. In addition, the project will explore how existentialism interfaces with spirituality and IPV survivors. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is another treatment intervention that has shown positive results for trauma survivors and will also be explored (Mueser, Rosenberg, & Rosendberg, 2009).

This project gives consideration to professionals primarily practicing in the State of Alaska. Alaska has a diverse population, with Alaska Native people comprising the second largest group of individuals living in the state. Since the focus of this project is IPV survivors, the community structure is considered. According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (2011) of Alaska's population, 30.8 % of women who reported lifetime

prevalence of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner had symptoms consistent with PTSD that related to the violence they experienced.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health, (2010), American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people have the highest rates of IPV when compared to all other groups. The term American Indian or Alaska Native refers to an individual possessing origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America and upholding tribal affiliation or community attachment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). According to the National Violence Against Women Survey (2011), one in three AI/AN females has been the victim of attempted rape or rape in their lifetime and rates of assault by an IPV partner are similar. Programs exist within various communities to help victims of IPV and to educate the community on the signs of PTSD and intimate partner violence.

Participation in counseling services is a starting place for IPV victims. Counselors can assist those who are learning to cope with the experience and help them process the effects of the trauma (Pargament, 2007). However, counselors generally feel ill prepared to address the integration of both spiritual and psychological aspects of treatment and often refer clients to a member of the clergy, such as a priest, reverend, chaplain, or some other spiritual expert. Unfortunately, not all spiritual leaders are trained to assist their parishioners in processing the effects of trauma. Consequently, the various helping professionals are in need of a skill set specific to the integration of spirituality within mental health services.

This project explores how spirituality in counseling can help individuals impacted by IPV. The research questions for the final project is: Is spiritual coping a viable framework for IPV survivors? Lastly, a training for counseling students is the application for this project, developed to educate counseling students about the use of spiritual coping when working with victims of

IPV.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Existential theory is a way of considering human distress. It intensely probes human nature, an environment riddled with loneliness, isolation, grief, and pain and labors to solve questions surrounding love, originality and meaning (Yalom & Josselson, 2011). A main theme in existentialism is the attention placed on the individual and the struggle to simplify human existence. Established scientific systems are lacking in the mission of comprehending the meaningful intricacies of individual understanding (Boss, 1979; May & Yalom, 1995; Norcross, 1987).

The existential approach offers that although humans cannot control outside events put upon them, the right to choose a response to such situations is a freedom and responsibility an individual can choose to exercise (Corey, 2013). This approach certainly fits well for some individuals experiencing trauma, as existential theory seeks to assist a client in developing into a genuine and more attentive being, including self-examination of social components, belief systems, principles and understanding (Cooper, 2003). Frankl (2006) highlights his own recognition of finding meaning in suffering, having lived through the Second World War and several concentration camps. In the camps, Frankl (2006) learned everything can be stripped away from an individual except an individual's attitude and ability to choose in any given situation.

Meaning making is a significant aspect in working through trauma. Using the therapeutic relationship to assist the client in developing insight and cues to the traumatic event, then

creating a meaningful narrative about the trauma by working through the feelings of shame and guilt is one goal of treatment for survivors of trauma (Bogat, Garcia, & Levendosky, 2013; Krupnik, 2002). The therapeutic alliance, or therapeutic relationship, is a vital part of existential psychotherapy and has been studied at length in terms of trauma therapy (Feeny, Keller, & Zoellner, 2010). This therapeutic alliance may be particularly significant in treatment for PTSD victims.

Initial rapport building is paramount in the treatment of trauma survivors and has been associated with positive results and engagement in counseling through various treatments, and diagnoses (Feeny et al., 2010). Hoffman (2009) describes the priority existential therapy places on the therapeutic relationship; certainly existential counselors work toward authenticity and sincerity, having confidence that the therapeutic work is the means for transformation in the therapeutic process.

According to Stolorow (2007), trauma literature focuses on peer-to-peer relationships as a vital component of trauma recovery. The therapeutic relationship is foundational in providing a healing setting and safe environment, both of which are essential parts of working with survivors of trauma (Herman, 1997; van der Kolk, McFarlane & Weisaeth, 1996). The counselor's role is to observe the trauma of the client, partnering in the moment with the client, and provide a safe space for the trauma work to occur (Corbett & Milton, 2011; Roth & Batson, 1993).

Hoffman (2009) makes the argument that practicing existential theory involves using a type of psychotherapy that is rooted in a heavy method of self-discovery. Counselors who use existential theories are committed to integrity about the human state. Existential theory includes a holistic methodology, seeking inclusive recognition of what it means to be human and to exist. Another tenet of existentialism highlights phenomenology; considerable importance is placed on

the personal knowledge of humanness. Wong (2009) places emphasis on our own understanding of being solitary beings, the acceptance of the idea of loneliness and how individuals seek purpose and community as a way to derive personal meaning. The core values of existential theory establish a clinical practice that is distinctively matched to speak to the emotional pain associated with trauma (Hoffman, 2009).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a sound support for survivors of trauma, as it has the research to back it up and is considered an evidence based practice. CBT is based on the principle that negative views are mediated by an individual's feelings, thoughts and ideas towards the world. These beliefs and ideas are not always accurate; correcting the inaccurate ideas is the focus (Corey, 2013). Cognitive restructuring involves teaching an individual how to recognize, observe, confront and alter the ideas connected to with the negative feelings (Mueser et al., 2009). In the CBT method, the primary means for change is the development of emotional processing of the trauma through frequent exposure and improvement and cognitive restructuring of the incident (Hemsley, 2010; Resick et al., 2008).

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) is a specific model in treating trauma survivors. The approach rests on the idea that when information is not fully processed, the initial perceived experience of the traumatic event will be stored just as it was interpreted, including any additional vague thoughts or perceptions that occurred during the event (Shapiro, & Maxfield, 2002). During this process, the therapy uses eye movements and dual attention stimuli through a process called desensitization to decrease stress and related avoidance to the stressful event. Shapiro and Maxfield (2002) believe that as an image becomes less salient, the

trauma survivor is better able to use more adaptive information to build new connections in memory.

There is value in looking at different theoretical models instead of using just one. Working in trauma counseling is multifaceted. Different aspects of an individual may be challenged, including psychological, biological, and social, at different times. The best possible recovery from the trauma uses various methods (Herman, 1997). Peres, Moreira-Almedia, Nasello, and Koenig (2006) believe spirituality may conceivably be an important part of cognitive reframing. A resilient attitude develops through positive learning from experiences, confidence, and quiet inner strength in working through difficult situations.

The theories that support Existential and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy are often explored in working with victims of IPV trauma. Some overlap in the two approaches exist including use of coping skills, preparing for the future, using here and now approach, and experiential techniques (Prasko et al., 2012) Both theories work toward assisting a client to find meaning after trauma.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

According to the American Psychiatric Association's, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th edition) (*DSM-5*) (APA, 2013), PTSD, including PTSD experienced by victims of IPV, has specific diagnostic criteria. This criteria include exposure to death or threats of death, acute injury, or sexual violence. The individual may experience or witness the act or threat of violence, including repeated exposure to intimate details of the violence.

In addition, intrusion symptoms linked to the traumatic act must be present and may include recurring memories of, or dreams about, the traumatic situation, and dissociation or "flashbacks" with possible loss of consciousness in the current environment. Additional

intrusion symptoms may include extended internal or external suffering that symbolize or represent an aspect of the trauma situation (APA, 2013).

According to the *DSM-5* (APA, 2013), an individual will avoid stimuli related to a traumatic event. It is common for the individual to avoid feelings, upsetting memories, individuals, environments, and activities related to the traumatic event. An individual is likely to experience negative changes in mood after trauma as evidenced by a failure to retain information surrounding the event, and persistent and irrational thoughts regarding the cause of the event.

Behavior change is likely to occur for individuals with PTSD (APA, 2013). Affected individuals often diminish their participation in activities they engaged in prior to the trauma. Feelings of being cut-off and separate from individuals and an inability to feel positive emotion may occur. For example, an individual may no longer feel caring sentiments or thoughts towards others they once cared for prior to the event. Serious change may also occur in arousal, leading to destructive behavior, an embellished startle response, lack of concentration, or problems sleeping (APA, 2013).

Intimate partner violence (IPV) includes: (a) physical violence, (b) sexual violence, (c) threats of physical or sexual violence, and (d) stalking and psychological aggression (including coercive tactics) by a current or former intimate partner. IPV may occur among cohabitating or non-cohabitating romantic or sexual partners and among opposite or same sex couples (Black et al., 2011). The Alaska Victimization Survey (2011), surveyed women in different communities across the State of Alaska. According to the survey, 50 out of 100 women in Fairbanks, Alaska, have experienced some form of IPV. In this survey, IPV included both threats and physical violence in romantic and sexual relationships. Due to the high levels of IPV experienced by women in Fairbanks, finding ways to cope with the trauma for the survivors is paramount as IPV

victims often exhibit PTSD characteristics (Philips, Rosen, Zoellner, & Feeny, 2006). Spirituality can be a means IPV survivors use to cope with surviving and later work towards a safer place of healing (Drumm et al., 2014).

Spirituality versus Religion

Religion is regarded as an ideal shared with others and attached to custom. The meaning of spirituality and religiousness has changed dramatically in the last forty years (Pargament, 2007). Until recently, much of the literature found regarding spirituality uses religion and spirituality interchangeably (Pargament & Saunders, 2007; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). Traditionally, religion was a broad concept that included individual and societal expression of good and bad (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). However, recent shifts indicate counseling professionals and social science are viewing “religiosity” and “spirituality” as polar opposites. Spirituality is the search for that which is sacred (Atchley, 2008; Gall et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2000; Pargament, 1999). The belief of the sacred is a broad range of non-deistic ideas, personified ideas of God, and naturalistic concepts related to our planet (Atchley, 2008; Gall et al., 2005). Religiousness is defined as spiritual thoughts, feelings and actions connected to a formal organized institution (Pargament & Saunders, 2007; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). Many religions are tied to a concept of a deity, or higher power. For most individuals, the term higher power represents God and an alternate reality (Gall et al., 2005).

Zinnbauer and Pargament (2005) suggest modern definitions of the spirituality and religion “place a substantive, static, institutional, objective, belief-based ‘bad’ religiousness in opposition to a functional, dynamic, personal, subjective, experience-based, ‘good’ spirituality” (p. 24). Arnette and colleagues (2007) clearly delineate spiritual coping as being vastly

individual. The construct of spirituality has gained more favor recently as people look for ways to incorporate spiritual habits into daily life (Pargament, 2007).

For some individuals, the practices related to their spiritual wellbeing include yoga, prayer, and meditation. This holistic approach has been used to assist IPV survivors in healing and moving towards better health (Allen & Wozniak, 2011). Many individuals, including mental health providers, are creating a worldview, which extends their worldview from traditional religious experiences to a more open view of spiritual transformation. Schwartz (2000) identifies spiritual transformation is a fundamental restructuring of an individual's identity and outlook on the purpose of life. The words religious and spiritual tend to be used interchangeably in some areas; however, for the purpose of this research project, spirituality is defined as "a search for the sacred" (Pargament, 1999, p. 12).

Spirituality

Spirituality has been found assist people coping with stress and trauma (Bonanno, 2004; Daniel, 2012; Wong-McDonald, 2000). Shaw, Joseph and Linley (2005) and Fallot (1997) identify spirituality as an important healing factor for female victims who have experienced abuse and trauma. The research explores the validity of spiritual coping in individuals who have experienced trauma and studies the efficacy in using spiritual coping. In addition, the research includes information about counselor integration of spirituality as part of an intergraded approach to addressing trauma related to IPV.

Gall and colleagues (2005) put forth a model of spiritual coping that identifies spirituality as having a role in the regular coping process of stressful life events. The role is formed by the individual's assessment of the circumstances and relies on additional coping actions. Additionally, meaning making, growth, life principles, and modification are all a part of the

copings process. Prayer and meditation are aspects of spiritual coping, which have shown to be effective helping in trauma and major life events (Gall et al, 2005; Lancaster & Palframan, 2008). Prayer appears to play a significant role (De Castella & Simmonds, 2013; Harris et al., 2010; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Prayer is helpful for trauma survivors to cope, providing a sense of calm and focus (El-Khoury et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2010). Drumm and colleagues (2013) studied spiritual coping with IPV victims and found that customs of prayer worked as the main method of growth in a faith connected resilience.

De Castella & Simmonds (2013) mentioned finding meaning and growth as the result of suffering by using a spiritual framework as a guide. The study examined phenomenological experiences of posttraumatic growth (PTG) following various traumas. The participants articulated finding value and gaining strength resulting from the ability to work through the pain of trauma. When severe abuse occurs, intentionally working through the pain and sorrow can serve an essential tenet to restore the emotional health of the victim (De Castella & Simmonds, 2013).

Spirituality and IPV Trauma

Extensive literature exists on the connections between spirituality and trauma. Knox, Catlin, Casper and Schlosser (2005) suggest that, historically, religious and spiritual issues are underrepresented in clinical education. According to Falsetti, Resick and Davis (2003), mental health workers often do not choose to explore spirituality in therapy. A hesitancy may exist for counselors to bring up the topic of spirituality for the fear of projecting their own values onto the client and the client's spirituality being personal to talk about (Mack, 1994). Watlington and Murphy (2006) convey awareness of a client's spiritual ideals as a valuable aspect of being considered a skilled multicultural clinician. A clinician should demonstrate the ability to provide

a spectrum of therapeutic services, including spiritual health and well-being. The spiritual aspect of an individual should be regarded with the same care as the emotional, physical and psychological.

A spiritually integrated approach developed to help victims of IPV, considers the positive and negative factors associated with spiritual coping. Watlington and Murphy's (2006) qualitative study included 65 African-American women from Maryland and the Washington D.C. area who experienced domestic violence during the past year. Women who evidenced high levels of spirituality accounted for higher levels of religious coping in the year after experiencing abuse. Watlington and Murphy (2006) found empirical evidence that spiritual knowledge such as compassion, thankfulness, relationship and support is connected to lower levels of depression. This shows the significant association between spirituality and depression and provides confirmation for the important role of spirituality has on the lives of African American women.

A spiritual framework for coping with stress exists. Gall and colleagues (2005) developed a model to grasp the concepts of spirituality, health and coping. However, no single spiritual factor indicating healing from trauma, exists (Gall et al., 2005). PTSD has been the diagnosis used across various studies that showcase changes in belief patterns following a trauma (Peres et al., 2007).

Culturally responsive treatment to IPV survivors includes: (a) counselor awareness to power issues, which may occur in working with this population, (b) the cultural context of the victim and (c) the "symbolic and moral meanings attached to the traumatic events" (Kroll, 2003, p. 669). Hage (2006) described IPV survivors use of inner strength and spiritual tools to cope with abuse. These IPV survivors in Hage's study built stronger self-awareness and developed additional problem-focused systems of coping.

After an individual becomes traumatized, they often search for a new experience of meaning and purpose for life. Spirituality is identified as a valuable factor in working through the pain the survivor feels, in an effort to work towards healing. A belief in spirituality is an integral part of many cultures. Spirituality is firmly rooted in an individual's pursuit to recognize the questions about meaning of life, and relationships, and all that which is sacred and inspiring (Moreira-Almeida & Koenig, 2006; Peres et al, 2007).

Kanagaratnam and colleagues (2012) collected information from 63 immigrant women from the Tamil community in Toronto, Canada. The women showed a noticeable preference for passive styles in coping rather than active styles. Passive coping strategies were connected to what the women saw as the cause of the abuse. Active coping was found to occur in relationship to specific situations, such as an increase frequency of abuse or spousal infidelity. Largely for the IPV victims who employed emotion-focused coping or passive coping, violence was less strongly connected to symptoms of PTSD (Kanagaratnam et. al., 2012). The benefit of using spiritual coping is the strength gained from the process and victims of IPV are challenged to adhere to their own personal spiritual practice (Drumm et al, 2013).

Existentialism and Spirituality

Existentialism and spirituality are connected; both are intensely based on a search for comprehending themes around life and meaning (Peres et al., 2007). Shaw, Joseph, and Linley, (2005) use the terms existential and spirituality interchangeably, as the terms have similar themes. Fontana and Rosenbeck (2004) suggest the quest to rationalize the purpose and meaning of the traumatic event(s) as a chief incentive for PTSD survivors to pursue assistance. Spirituality offers a perspective, which assists the survivor in giving purpose and making sense of distress in addition to providing hope and encouragement (Peres et al., 2007).

When an individual experiences trauma, an acknowledgement of a death occurs, allowing the victim of trauma to more fully and richly understand the value, meaning and enjoyment of life (Frankl, 1969; Yalom, 1980). According to Corbett and Milton (2011), a counselor using existential therapy works as an individual in a meaningful relationship with the client. A traumatized client's therapeutic connection has supplied resolution of thematic concerns, which characterized curative trauma work (Roth & Baston, 1993).

Cultural Context, Alaska Native People

The population in the State of Alaska is diverse in culture and ethnicity; however according to the United States Census data, in 2011 AI/AN people represented the second largest race population percent in Alaska at 14% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011) after Caucasian individuals at 66 %. AI/AN are an Indigenous people, a culture that values simplicity; individuals from a nomadic family support a hunting and fishing subsistence lifestyle in many village communities (Wexler, Moses, Hopper, Joule, & Garoutte, 2013). According to the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, there are many different Alaska Native people. Each group of Native people has a different set of cultural values (reference appendix i).

Duran, (2006) discusses a "soul wound" for Indigenous peoples as a wound which is the end result of historical trauma, internalized oppression, bereavement and loss, brought about when the trauma is not dealt with from previous generations and must be dealt with in subsequent generations. Healing is important for the individual as well as the family and community (Duran, 2006). Healing does not occur and can worsen the wound when community organizations and leaders choose not to address the concerns. Counselors and clients must work together to address how attempts have been made to remove Indigenous ways of being. Both AI/AK and non- AI/AK counselors must make a commitment to understand this concept;

without this understanding, therapies will fail, which continues the oppression (Clearing-Sky, 2007; Duran, 2006). If the soul wound is not efficiently addressed, each person and his or her descendents are fated to experience and perpetuate different forms of spiritual suffering in the future (Duran, Firehammer, & Gonzalez, 2008).

Alaska Native IPV Rates

According to the Tjaden & Thoennes National Violence Against Women Survey (2011), the highest rates of violence occur in American Indian and Alaska Native Women (AIAN); 34 % of AI/AN reported sexual violence, 17 % reported being stalked and 61% reported being physically assaulted (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2011). Strayer and colleagues (2014) identified Alaska Native individuals ages 20 - 29 as having the highest assault injury hospitalization rate of any age group (42.6 per 10,000). The rate for this age group was 2.3 times the age-adjusted rate for all ages in this study (18.4 per 10,000).

For the AI/AN population, evidence indicates violent oppression correlates to posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, alcohol abuse and suicide attempts (Evans- Campbell, et al., 2006; Grayshield et al., 2015; Hamby & Skupien M., 1998). Native counseling providers and non-Native providers would benefit by collaborating to provide appropriate choices for AIAN women victims. Also of importance, AI/AN women were 7.8 times more likely to be hospitalized as the victim of assault than non-Native women statewide (2002-2011), 18.4 and 2.2 per 10,000, respectively). The leading cause of injury needing hospitalization in twelve regions in Alaska by AI/AN individuals (2002- 2011), was assault, rated third after falls and suicide attempts. AI/AN individuals were 6.1 times more probable to be hospitalized for an intentional injury as opposed to non-Natives across the State (2002-2011, 43.2 and 7.1 per 10,000, respectively) (Stayer et al., 2014).

Alaska Native Culture and Spirituality

Understanding historical trauma (HT) and respecting culture and education about colonization is imperative to working with Alaska Native and any other Indigenous people. Historical trauma is defined as unresolved trauma with an outcome of grief, which has an impact on succeeding generations and survivors (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Grayshield, 2015). Above and beyond the specific ailments and trauma an AI/AN individual may seek relief for in counseling, there may be a history of HT present for the individual. If counselors are not of an Indigenous background, they must recognize the power differential present in the therapeutic relationship and must take care not to re-injure the client. Counselors who are void of an essential spiritual practice would do better to refer an AI/AN client to someone better equipped to meet the client's needs (Duran, 2006). Cultural competence is a current catchphrase, however is often not learned in classes at graduate school. Competence like many AI/AN teachings and traditional knowledge is a process, which needs a long-lasting, lifelong commitment to social justice and change (Clearing-Sky, 2007).

In much of western culture, the interventions and treatments fail to grasp a holistic Indigenous traditional healing approach, as well as the concepts of spirituality and wellness (Cote & Schissel, 2008; Evans- Campbell, 2008; Marsh et. al., 2015; Poonwassie, 2005). There is a great need to examine Indigenous ways of knowing and what therapeutic methods work for this population. Possessing knowledge is foundational for Indigenous peoples, obtained through revelations like; dreams and instinct and passed on by elders, through stories and teachings.

Knowledge is thought to be spiritual, from ancestors and spirits (Marsh et al., 2015). The difficulty remains that spiritual knowledge is not measured by empirical methods, which is a problem for western ways of quantifying information (Hart, 2010; Linklater, 2010; Marsh et al.,

2015). Western psychotherapy is largely an American and European occurrence. There are sizable areas of the world which view spirituality and religiosity as a prime etiological framework to consider mental health issues and a basic means for relief of symptoms.

Cultural Competency

Will Mayo currently works as the Executive Director for Tribal Government and Client Services at Tanana Chiefs Conference(TCC). He is the former president of TCC and a former pastor for several churches in Interior Alaska. Mayo was asked how non-Alaska Native individuals convey cultural sensitivity in working in a therapeutic relationship with Alaska Native individuals. “Everyone responds to people who care. Native people respond to kindness” (W. Mayo, personal communications, March 28, 2016). Counselors should have training to respond to the differences each person brings. Someone who has not walked in healing may respond differently than someone who has.

W. Mayo (personal communications, March 28, 2016) advised a relaxed state, “Your uneasiness will be projected, but Native people are gracious and will try to help ease the situation, possibly with humor. Humor breaks down many barriers”. W. Mayo used the example of when an individual first comes into a new situation, like visiting a village. The people from the village know the new individual is not from the community and show them kindness, understanding the environment is new, and different. Alaska Native people from smaller villages, with populations of about 100 – 200 people, may interact differently, showing caution when first meeting someone. The individual will try to read the person to see if the person is safe. Once the ice is broken, possibly through humor, the individual will open up. Counselors should have a willingness to experience the client as a human being, “connecting on a human level”.

W. Mayo gave caution by saying, “every village has its own personality”. Different experiences and situations have occurred and this can change over time. At the basic level there are more things people have in common than not. “There is a biblical truth that says treat others the way you want to be treated.” In the Christian belief system, three things are of importance when working through trauma; forgiveness, humility, and repentance. These are important spiritual coping tools, and have been the key to my healing journey”. When people are wounded through trauma, they become bitter and lose balance. Mayo stated his belief that “spiritual coping is any tool that returns homeostasis”.

Integration of Spiritual Coping into Counseling Practice

An integrated approach utilizing mind, body and spirit is important in work with survivors of trauma (Targ & Levine, 2002). Targ and Levine (2002) found that female, cancer patients who used a mind-body-spirit approach exhibited positive transformation in thoughts about quality of life, anxiety, depression, and spiritual well-being as well as better spiritual integration and less signs of evasion methods as compared to the members of the regular support groups. The integration of mind-body-spirit, suggests people are more than logical creatures. Innate emotional and social connections nourish the soul from which an individual derives meaning and defines oneself (Kerr, 2014).

A trauma survivor’s spiritual beliefs contain value following a traumatic event. Janoff-Bulman (1992) states that spirituality supplies a better sense of meaning for a trauma survivor, as the lens through which the world is viewed changes, leading to a more enhanced, spiritually enriched life. The counselor’s job is not to promote specific belief systems, but the counselor should be comfortable when traumatized client’s bring up issues surrounding spirituality and existentialism (Shaw et al., 2005; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Current research is limited regarding spiritual coping used by victims to heal from toxic relationships (Drumm et al., 2013). Farnsworth & Callahan (2013) attest particular attention should be given to client and counselor spiritual values due to signs of the influence of these values on the clients results at termination of counseling. In trauma work, for engagement to occur with clients, counselors should have already done some self-exploration of their own existential feelings, moods, and spirituality, as the counselor may experience strong emotion as a traumatized client's development of healing may be lengthy (Corbett & Milton, 2011). Individuals heal from trauma when the whole individual is assisted and a safe environment created to discover their own world (Herman, 1997; Paulson & Krippner, 2007).

Counselors have a responsibility to work towards acknowledging a client's fear and traumas instead of driving the client to conventional curative models (Corbett & Milton, 2011). van der Kolk and colleagues (1996) highlight the main crisis of spirit which occurs in traumatic situations. Due to the impact of the spiritual component, a loss to this dimension of self occurs. More frequently than not, the victim of the trauma is unaware of the impact on the spirit and because the aspect can be hard to approach, may not address it successfully. During times of extreme suffering, when one's spirit is crushed, having a witness to such events is essential. Counselors have the ability to "witness" such an occurrence through the retelling of the victim's trauma, attending to the mind, body and spirit (Rambo, 2009).

Application

Student Counselors

The literature supports the importance of students in the counseling field adopting an attitude of acceptance and competency in terms of the integration of spirituality in trauma informed care for clients who have experienced IPV (Drumm et al., 2013). The practical

application of the research is to provide education through training. A training was developed for counseling students to ensure they receive the information about spirituality to better equip them for interactions with clients in the future. Currently, there is no training module to support this topic for counseling students; providing a training would meet this need.

Student counselors need preparation to work with populations of survivors of trauma. Lecture, individual reflection and small group discussion are possible ways of preparing the student counselor. The training created as part of this research project provides the opportunity to work on knowing one's self-spirituality prior to assisting client's in identifying their spirituality. To begin the training for student counselors, the instructor uses the literature to discuss the importance of looking at varied means for working with trauma survivors.

The literature supports the idea that existential theory is a viable means for assisting survivors of trauma. Focusing on the humanness of the individual, existential theory seeks to assist a client to develop into a genuine, more attentive being, including self-examination of social facets, belief systems, principles and understanding. Highlighting the importance of meaning making after the individual has worked through the trauma can be one of the most valuable parts of the journey. Students will need definitions of spirituality and religion to better understand how some individuals can become very put off if a terms used incorrectly. Some clients may use the terms interchangeability but differences do exist and the student should have a good grasp to be informed and model the use of the words with clients.

Student counselors should take their own culture and background into account as they determine and search for spiritual meaning making. In classroom instruction student counselors are asked to consider culture in their work with others, so knowing their own cultural background will be a paramount piece to build from. A spiritual awareness questionnaire was

developed to accompany the student training. The questionnaire helps the student identify and define what spirituality means to them. The questionnaire asks the student 6 questions to gain better comprehension of the student's belief of spirituality. What does spirituality mean to you? Who or what adds value to understanding your spirituality? How or why is spirituality useful? When does spirituality become important, if at all? Why is it important to have an understanding of spirituality? How does spirituality influence your life?

The questionnaire assists the student counselor in making meaning of spirituality. Existentialism and spirituality are close in nature; the questionnaire is meant to allow the counselor ample opportunity to wrestle with personal beliefs prior to listening to a client express personal beliefs. After the questionnaire is completed in a written form, the student would be responsible to participate in small group discussion with other students. The group size could be groupings of two to three individuals.

The small group discussion provides the opportunity to see the differences and similarities in each participant. This exercise would last approximately 30-45 minutes to give enough time for each student participant to share with his or her group. Being able to listen to one's peers express answers about spirituality is a parallel process as this will be the same as sitting with a client. Through this exercise, the student counselor can self-reflect and gain personal spiritual awareness.

The training is meant for personal growth and development. All student participants at the end of the training should complete a written evaluation. This will give the instructor/facilitator of the training opportunity to reflect on what the strengths of the training are, as well as what can be worked on for future groups and trainings. The tool would also provide the student counselor the opportunity to thoroughly consider how countertransference could

occur with clients if the counselor is not aware of personal views related to assisting a client with his or her spiritual search for meaning.

Student counselors working with survivors of trauma will learn to recognize the importance of healing through spirituality. The spiritual aspect is as valuable as the physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects of healing. Students should begin to recognize the importance of knowing their own spiritual selves. This will allow discussion, foster questions and equip future counselors with the opportunity for growth in this area.

Students studying counseling, social work, and psychology would benefit from additional way of supporting a client's healing from trauma. The conventional methods of counseling are discussed, and taught both professionally and formally in the educational system. This training will focus on the importance of integrating spirituality into counseling, and why it should also be considered at the student level.

Education for student counselors, which include a holistic approach to viewing individuals is a good first step in learning more about spirituality. Self-evaluation is an important piece to defining one's spiritual platform and the questionnaire may be a good start to beginning the process of knowing this aspect of self. Lastly the ability to sit and listen to others tell about their thoughts on spirituality would be the first opportunity to sit with others as they unpack this area of the self. This also affords the student counselor a chance to tell of their own spiritual process and journey to other colleagues.

The questionnaire is incorporated in training for the student counselor to work through and recognize one's own spiritual dimensions. The training would encompass time for lecture, personal reflection by completing a written questionnaire, and small group discussion.

Conclusion

Alaska has high rates of IPV trauma, and there is a need to address IPV clients who seek counseling to recover from their traumas (The University of Alaska Anchorage Justice center, 2011). Literature exists regarding spirituality and coping with victims of trauma, but more research is needed. What is missing is a specific spiritual practice that indicates healing from trauma. Spiritual coping mechanisms mentioned in the literature include prayer, meditation and meaning making from suffering, however more research is needed to show empirical evidence of the healing using these areas of coping.

When working with AI/AN individuals, cultural consideration regarding historical trauma should be considered during the information gathering stage with the client. For AI/AN clients, spiritual coping may be easier, as spirituality is deeply rooted in their culture. The mentality of growth and healing all facets of an individual, mind, body, and spirit, is important.

Existentialism was chosen as the framework due to the focus of the theory's importance of meaning making and identifying one's own existence. Spirituality and Existentialism are similar in thought and both place a high regard on meaningful relationships with others, and knowing oneself. Therapy with IPV survivors may need to encompass varied theoretical frameworks that incorporate multiple theoretical perspectives.

Existential theories are a viable framework for working with trauma survivors, but more research is needed regarding specific work with IPV trauma. Trauma changes the process for individuals and lens through which life is viewed. Existentialism and spirituality are closely related and share similar ideals of searching for meaning and purpose. A high value is placed on the therapeutic alliance between counselor and client. Spiritual coping could be a way of practicing existential therapy with clients who have experienced trauma.

The research question asks whether is spiritual coping a viable framework for working with IPV survivors and it proved feasible. The research discussed does show that spiritual coping is being used with trauma survivors. Spiritual coping when used with existential practice may be another way counselors can explore the survivor's sense of self.

Student counselors should be equipped in both classroom instruction and practice to discuss the possibility of the use of spiritual coping with survivors of trauma. This requires student counselors to self-reflect and evaluate about their own ideas regarding spirituality prior to doing the work in session with clients. This is a proactive approach allowing students adequate time to consider how their own outlook of spirituality could be projected onto their client during counseling. At the very least understanding one's own thoughts regarding spirituality can give some confidence to the student. Having greater self-awareness may give way to a more accepting stance for using spiritual coping when working with clients who may choose this framework.

Counselors should have a firm understanding of their own views on spirituality before attempting to assist any clients including those from a different cultural background such as, AI/AN individuals. The AI/AN IPV clients are a third more likely to experience violence throughout their lifetime and counselors should be prepared to acknowledge Alaska Native cultural values in assisting the individual work through trauma. This may include consideration of historical traumas and other cultural ideas of "woundedness". Counselors should remember that at the basic level there are more things people have in common with one another than not. "Everyone responds to people who care" (W. Mayo, personal communications, March 28, 2016).

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SAINT LAWRENCE ISLAND YUPIK VALUES

- ▶ Listen with your heart and mind
- ▶ Honor Family
- ▶ Give Service to others
- ▶ Never give up
- ▶ Respect all living things
- ▶ Remember advice of elders
- ▶ Plan for the future
- ▶ Be independent
- ▶ Avoid laziness
- ▶ Gather knowledge and wisdom

CURVE VALUES

- Help other people
- Help with family chores and needs
- Early to bed and early to rise
- Provide time to see how your life is going
- There's always time to say **PLEASE** after your work is done
- Respectful** learn to do things yourself
- Respect and honor your elders
- Always show gratitude
- Listen to all advice given to you
- Remember what you are taught and told
- Respect other people's belongings
- Respect the animals you catch for food
- Wash your hands and with wisdom from the elders
- Never give up or stop trying to get your mind and body healthy

BRISTOL BAY SCIENCE VALLEY

- CRISTO REAY TUPIK VALUES**
- ✓ Have respect for our land and its resources at all times
 - ✓ Be helpful to one another
 - ✓ Share with others, whenever possible
 - ✓ Respect and care for other's property
 - ✓ Respect spiritual values
 - ✓ Learn hunting and outdoor survival skills
 - ✓ Provide for and protect someone of your family
 - ✓ Through love, respect your children
 - ✓ Respect your elders
 - ✓ Work hard and don't be lazy
 - ✓ Refrain from alcohol and drug use
 - ✓ Learn, preserve, and be proud of the Native way of life

UNANGAY (ALBU) VALUES

- [illegible]

VALUE OF THE FINANCIAL POSITION

- Life is a gift to you. What you make of it is your gift in return.**
- Know your family tree, relations and people's history.**
- Live with and respect the land, sea, and all nature.**
- Respect and be aware of the creator in all living things.**
- Always learn and maintain a balance.**
- Subsistence is sustenance for the life.**
- Our language defines who we are and lets us communicate with even another.**

ST. LAWRENCE ISLAND
YUP'IK REGION

CUP'ik REG

UNANGAX (ALEUT) REGION

INUPIAG

ATHABASCAN
REGION

ALUTIG

SOUTHEAST REGION
Tingzi, Haida,
Tumshian

NORTHWEST ARCTIC INDIAN VALLEY

- ### NORTHWEST ARCTIC INUIT VALUES
- Knowledge of Language
 - Knowledge of Family Tree
 - Sharing
 - Humility
 - Respect for Others
 - Love for Children
 - Cooperation
 - Hard Work
 - Respect for Elders
 - Respect for Nature
 - Avoid Conflict
 - Family Values
 - Humor
 - Spirituality
 - Domestic Skills
 - Hunter Success
 - Respectful to Tribe

NORTH SLOPE INUPIAQ VALUES

- Sharing 分享 *xiāngfēn*
- Compassion 同情 *tóngqíng*
- Family and Kinship 家鄉情 *jiāxiāngqíng*
- Avoidance of Conflict 避免衝突 *biǎnqǐ chōngtú*
- Painting Traditions 畫廊 *huàláng*
- Humor 幽默 *yōumō*
- Love and Respect for Our Elders and One Another 愛和尊重我們的長輩和彼此 *àihé zūnzhòng wǒmen de zhǎnpǎi hé bǐcǐ*
- Respect for Nature 尊重自然 *zūnzhòng zìrán*
- Spirituality 精神 *jīngshén*
- Cooperation 合作 *hézuò*
- Knowledge of Language 語言知識 *yǔyán zhīshí*
- Humility 謙卑 *qiānbēi*

SOUTHEAST TRADITIONAL TRIBAL VALUES

- Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors
- Respect for Self, Elders and Others
- Respect for Nature and Property
- Patience
- Pride in Family, Clan and Traditions is found in Love, Loyalty and Generosity
- Be Strong in Mind, Body and Spirit
- Humour
- Hold Each Other Up
- Listen Well and with Respect
- Speak with Care
- We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea
- Reverence for Our Creator
- Live in Peace and Harmony
- Be Strong and Have Courage

Authorizing the Board of Directors to execute the same.

- ### KODIALETHU: CULTURAL VALUES
- Our Elders
 - Our Heritage language
 - Family and the kinship of our ancestors and living relatives
 - Ties to our homeland
 - A subsistence lifestyle, respectful of and sustained by the environment
 - Traditional arts, skills and ingenuity
 - A worldview that differs from ancestral beliefs to the diverse cultures of today
 - Sharing: we welcome everyone
 - Sense of humor
 - Learning by doing, observing and listening
 - Stewardship of the animals, land, sky and waters
 - Our people: we are responsible for each other and ourselves in all of our actions
 - Respect for self, others and our environment



Spiritual Coping

Damaris A. Bronson
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Spring 2016

Introduction

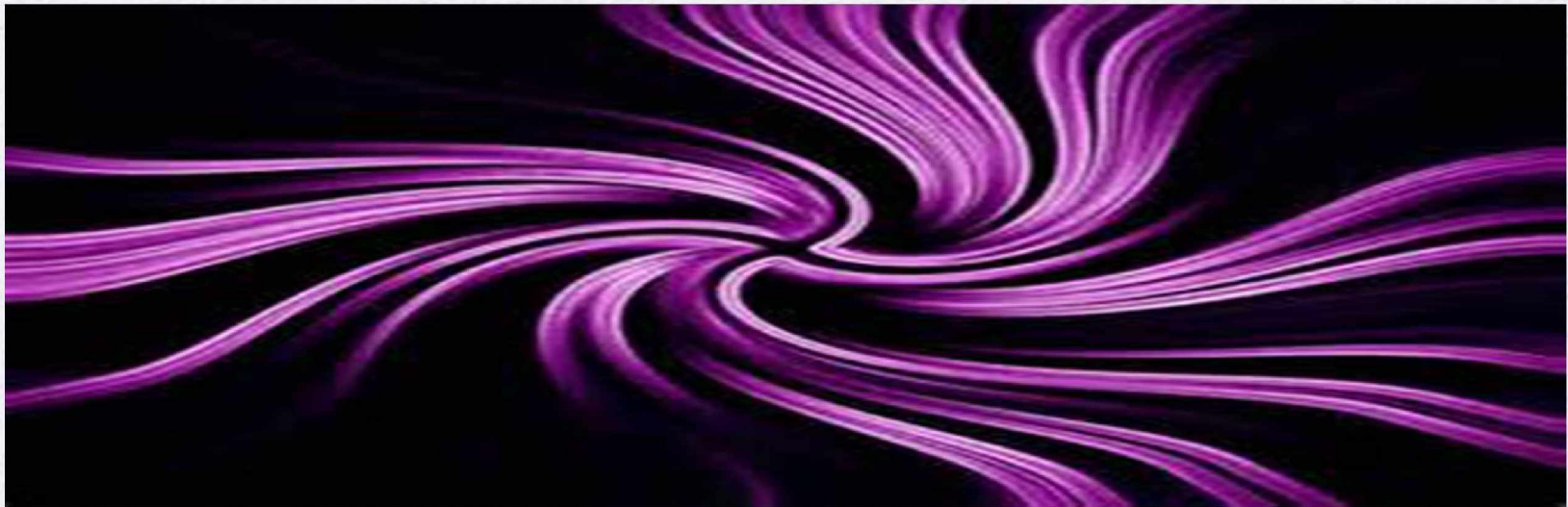
Project Background information

Explores how spirituality in counseling can help individuals impacted by trauma

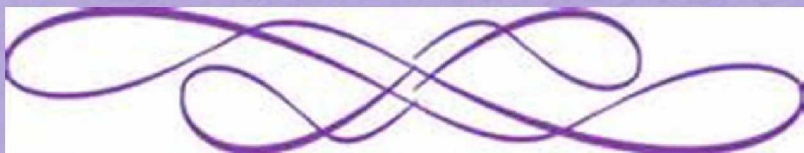
Research question:

Is spiritual coping a viable approach for intimate partner violence (IPV) survivors?

Training and questionnaire



Literature Review



What areas should be explored to answer the research question?

Framework ?
Existentialism

Discussion of Spirituality and Existentialism

Spirituality and survivors of IPV trauma

Cultural context

IPV rates

Culture & Spirituality

Cultural competency

Integration of spiritual
coping into practice



Framework

- ❑ Existentialism
- ❑ Existential theory is a way of thinking regarding human distress



Spirituality vs. Religion

Spirituality & Religion are important to define

Religion is regarded as an ideal shared with others and attached to custom



“religiosity” and “spirituality” as polar opposites

Spirituality is the search for that which is sacred

Atchley, 2008; Gall et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2000; Pargament & Saunders, 2007; Pargament, 2007; Pargament, 1999; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005

Spirituality

- ❓ What does spirituality have to do with individuals who experience trauma?
- ❓ Spirituality assists in coping with trauma.
- ❓ Spirituality has validity & shows efficacy. It is an important factor in healing for female victims who experience abuse and trauma.

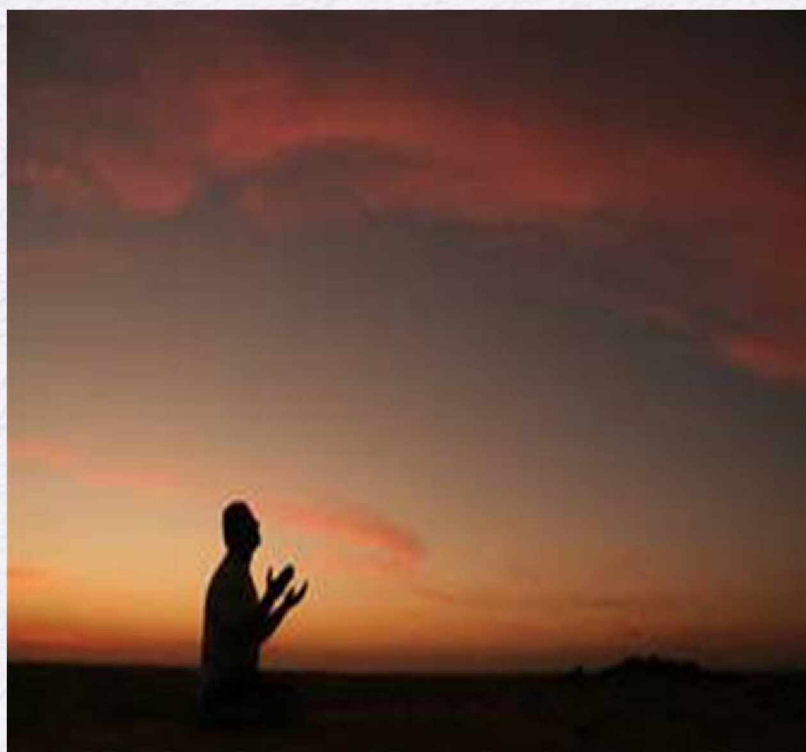


Bonanno, 2004; Daniel, 2012; Fallot, 1997; Shaw, Joseph & Linley, 2005; Wong-McDonald, 2000

Spiritual Coping

Spiritual coping identifies spirituality as a role in the process of stressful life events

Prayer, meditation and meaning-all have shown to be effective in helping survivors of trauma

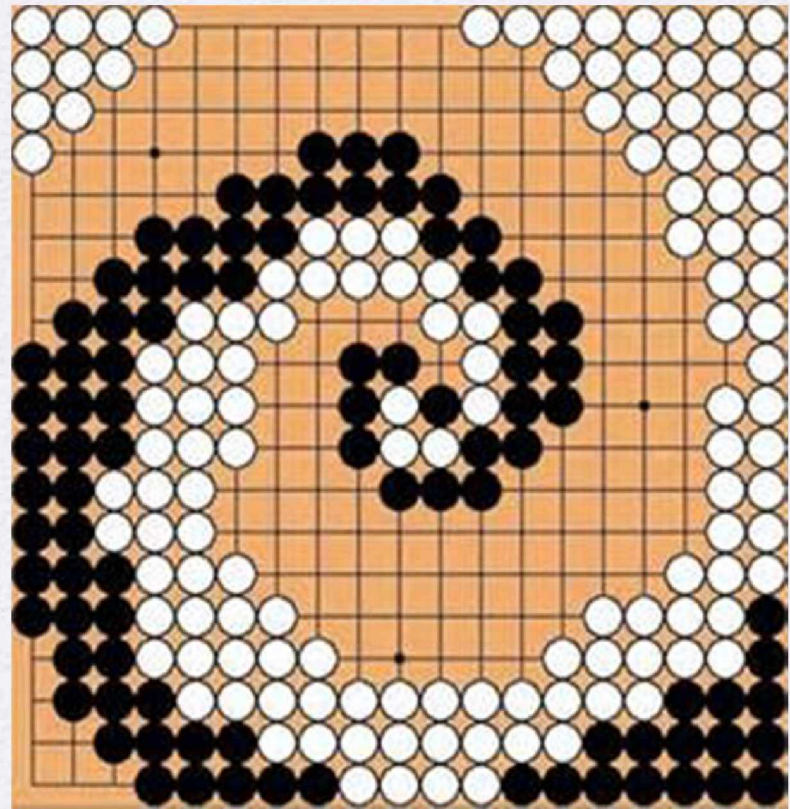


Gall et al., 2005; Lancaster & Palframan, 2008

Existentialism and Spirituality

The ideals of spirituality and existentialism are connected

Spirituality offers perspective



Spirituality & IPV Trauma

Spirituality can be a means IPV survivors use to deal with surviving and begin to work towards a safer place of healing



Cultural context

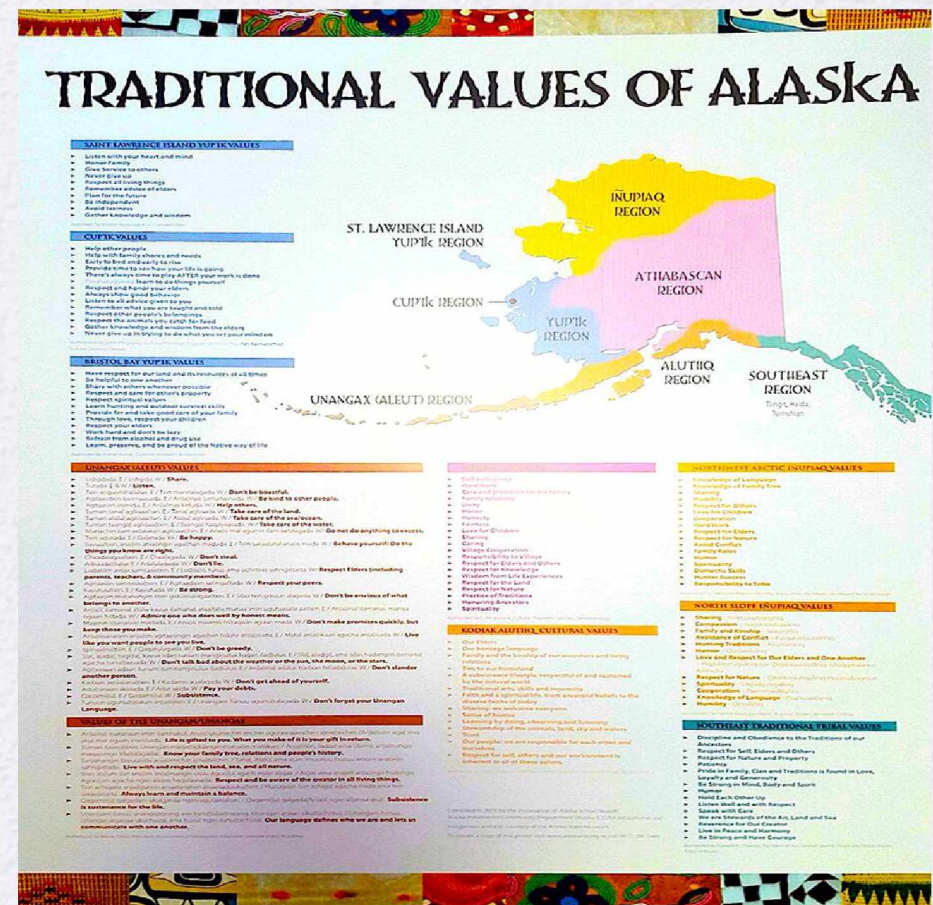
IPV rates

Collaboration of Native counseling providers and non-Native providers

Alaska Native Culture & Spirituality

Indigenous ways of knowing

Spiritual knowledge is not measured by empirical methods



Boyer, 2001; Hamby & Skupien, 1998; Marsh et al., 2015

Cultural Competency & Integration into practice



☐ Everyone responds to people who care. Native people respond to kindness ☐ Will Mayo, 2016

Use humor, it breaks down many barriers

☐ When people are wounded through trauma, they become bitter and lose balance. Spiritual coping is any tool that returns homeostasis ☐ Will Mayo, 2016

A trauma survivor ☐ spiritual beliefs contain value following the experience of a traumatic event

Application: Training/presentation

Training is comprised of 4 parts:

Lecture

Self-reflection

Small group discussion

Wrap-up and evaluation



Questionnaire

REFLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

This self-reflection questionnaire is a tool to assist the student to identify and define what spirituality means to them. This questionnaire is for personal use, and serves to help the student gain a better view of his or her own spirituality.

1. What does spirituality mean to you?

2. Who adds value to your understanding of spirituality?

3. Where is spirituality useful?

4. When does spirituality become important?

5. Why is it important to have an understanding of spirituality?

6. How does spirituality influence your life?

Project summary

Conclusions

- ❑ There is a need to address IPV clients who seek counseling to recover from their trauma.
- ❑ The research question asks whether spiritual coping is a viable approach for working with IPV survivors and it proved feasible.
- ❑ Spiritual coping when used with existential practice may be another way counselors can explore the survivor's sense of self.
- ❑ When working with AI/AK individuals, cultural consideration regarding historical trauma should be considered during the information gathering stage with the client.

Continued conversation

- ❑ Student counselors should be equipped in both classroom instruction and practice to discuss the possibility of spiritual coping with trauma survivors.
- ❑ Through training, including self-reflection, student counselors can equip themselves to consider their own ideals for spirituality.
- ❑ Presentations give opportunity for individuals to continue the conversation and recognize needs and identify resources in local communities.

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**Additional references available upon request